The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

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THE NEW YEAR.

The passing bell proclaimed it here,
The mystic midnight of the year,
Sacred to death and birth.
In silence comes a year new given,
In silence goes the dead unshriven
To all the past of earth.

O friends beloved, God keep you all!
Softly my prayers and blessings fall
On each unconscious head:
Your eyes from tears, your hearts from pain,
Your homes with joy, your stores with gain,
Be kept and comforted!

There is no room for strife or hate!
We are so small, and God so great,
And his all wrongs' redress.
Forget the blind, unworthy deed,
Remember each heart's sorest need,
Pity and tenderness.

There's not enough of love to lose,
There's not enough of joy to choose,
That we should miss the least;
But love need ask no doubtful leave.
She still can give, though none receive,
And find the giving blest.

—*Henrietta Bingham, in the Christian Life.*

THE IMMORTAL NOW.

Sit not blindfold, Soul, and sigh
For the immortal By-and-by!
Dreamer, seek not heaven afar
On the shores of some strange star!
This a star is,—this, thine earth!
Here the germ awakes to birth
Of God's sacred life in thee,
Heir of immortality!

Inmost heaven its radiance pours
Round thy windows, at thy doors,
Asking but to be let in,
Waiting to flood out thy sin,
Offering thee unfailing health,
Love's refreshment, boundless wealth.
Voices at thy life's gate say,
"Be immortal, Soul, to-day!"

Thou canst shut the splendor out,
Darken every room with doubt,
From the entering angels hide
Under tinselled wefts of pride;
While the pure in heart behold
God in every flower unfold,
While the poor his kingdom share,
Reigning with him everywhere.

Oh, let Christ and sunshine in!
Let his love its sweet way win!
Nothing human is too mean
To receive the King unseen.
Not a pleasure or a care
But celestial robes may wear.
Impulse, thought, and action may
Live immortally to-day.

Balance not in scales of time
Deathless destinies sublime!
What vague future can weigh down
This great Now that is thine own?
Love were miserly that gave
Only gifts beyond the grave.
Heaven makes every earth-plant thrive:
All things are in God alive.

Oh, the stifled bliss and mirth
At the weary heart of earth

We, her children, might awake!
Songs would from her bosom break;
Toil, unfettered from its curse,
God's glad purpose would rehearse,
If with him we understood
Of creation, "It is good."

Soul, perceive thy perfect hour!
Let thy life burst into flower!
Heaven is opening to bestow
More than thou canst think or know.
Now to thy true height arise!
Enter now thy Paradise!
In to-day to-morrow see,
Now is immortality!

—*Lucy Larcom.*

THE ATTAINMENT OF PEACE.

As to the little details of life, it is fitting to do them well; but to torment one's self about them is folly. You do not do them one whit the better for being so anxious about them. What will it matter to you when the quiet sunlight strikes upon your grave, whether this small detail or that went quite right? But it will matter much if in the restlessness you created you lost the power of possessing the peace of God. For this sort of thing is sometimes carried into our moral and spiritual life, and infects them with its poison. We spend so much care upon minor duties and disturb our conscience so much with regard to them that we have no time, and, indeed, no interest, for the larger duties, and lose all the important things in life. Whereas, if we saw and did these larger duties, all the smaller duties about which we worry would be done without trouble. Their doing is contained in the doing of the greater.

Self-questioning is wise at times. But to make it the business of life to be always groping among our sins is simply to accustom ourselves to the touch of decay, to the taste of evil, and to root restlessness in our nature. Rather look out of yourself to God. Fix your thoughts, hopes, aspirations, on his holiness, love, and peace; fix your love on Christ, the image of God's character, the ideal of your human life. That is the way to escape from over-carefulness and to avoid at the same time the danger of carelessness of sin. For he who gazes on God in Christ, and loves him upon whom he gazes, cannot sin; for he is born of God. Love moves him irresistibly to do all things to please him whom he loves. Love of God is the true opposite of this corroding anxiety about the soul. "Fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love, but perfect love casteth out fear."

And, last of all, what is the practical usage which brings us power to conquer anxiety, to subdue intemperance, to lay aside the spirit which despairs of good, to conquer the spirit of selfish mournfulness, and which is itself also a means of rest? It is "in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving," to "let your requests be made known unto God."

"In everything," says Saint Paul! We speak of a few things to God, only those fit, we think, for the ears of the great King. Why tell him, and would he listen to the little troubles, little pleasures of existence? As if to God there were great or small, as if he measured the importance of things by our scale! Moreover, if he is our Father at all, he is sure to care about everything belonging to us; and, when we have intrusted our anxieties to him, they are half relieved. It is true he knows what we want; but, all the same, he likes to hear of it from us. It makes him feel himself loved, if I may so express the desire of the Eternal for sympathy from his children. And it makes us in turn feel his love for us, so that, though often he cannot give us our desires, we are at peace. For the answer to prayer which is dearest and best is the consciousness that God loves us, and that consciousness is the finest test.

Again, its use brings the presence of God into all our life; and that presence realized makes us tremble through and through with joy at the certainty of the triumph of good. Who can despair of himself or of the world when he sees with the eye of the spirit the Lord of life—and that life, holiness through love—always at man's right hand? Whatever prayer may or may not do, it does bring the divine into love, it does sanctify common life, it does shed a radiance upon sorrow, it does make us hope with a hope which shall not be ashamed. For the rescue of all men from sin it does encourage and confirm the mighty faith, by which we best live, of the final victory of good. It gives us the quiet spirit when it makes that faith sure. It places God in our midst; and then,

"God in the midst of us, we shall not be moved."

If we pray, it is almost impossible the next moment to do that sin against which we pray. It would be so bad a lie that we prefer to omit prayer if we are resolved on sin; for to pray to God for help, and then to rush into the very guilt against which we pray, is indeed to take his name in vain.

Lastly, if it brings God to our side, how can we mourn over our life in selfish sorrow? For that is to complain of what seems best to him that we should do and suffer. Still, as prayer has sometimes the tendency of leading us to dwell too much on our affairs, encourages at times our talk about sorrow, absorbs us somewhat in our own self-consciousness, Saint Paul, knowing this, links, as its necessary companion, praise to prayer. With thanksgiving, he says, let your requests be made known unto God. Guard, that is, the health of prayer with the strong power of joy. In everything give thanks; for all things work together for your final good, if you love God.

Thus prayer keeps clear of obstacles the paths of peace of heart, and is itself a means toward that peace. It fits us for life in that region where God himself abides; it fills the heart with God; and, where God is, the deep peace dwells which, in his nature, is the result of perfect harmony of being.

Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. Believe that the Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And then—yes, then, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—*Stopford A. Brooke.*

I find God made known as he is manifested in man. We say a great deal about the manifestation of God in nature, as he reveals himself in the forces and arrangements of the outer world; and this is well. But, after all, I cannot help believing that our best conceptions of God come through the men and women who have been so related to the life of God that they have been enabled to tell us something about him in and through their own lives.—*Rev. Francis B. Hornbrooke, "In Spirit and in Truth."*

THE STILL HOUR.

THE NEW YEAR.

The glowing wintry sky bends softly over
The still, dark earth that waits the coming morn;
And, while the sun lags slow,—belated rover!—
Another year is born.

When the white moonlight hid the stars' pale glory,
And bells from many a steeple rung his knell,
Like a poor pilgrim, weary, bowed, and hoary,
The Old Year said farewell.

And, ever ready for the fresh beginning,
Regrets for by-gone days full soon are said;
Forgot are all the sorrow and the sinning:
We yearn new paths to tread.

Ah! let us do the thing we would be doing,
And let us be the thing we fain would be;
In the new paths still higher aims pursuing,
To nobler destiny.

Let it be now; real work, not idle scheming;
Our grand life-story truly, plainly told;
Then blessed days shall come, as in our dreaming,
When this New Year is old.

—*Housekeeper's Weekly.*

Dreamy meditators on the past, active strivers in the present, hopeful prophets of the future, preach, all of you, the kingdom of God by faith, by hope, by love. As time and all of its works, possessions, joys, is passing rapidly away, secure that which is unchanging and eternal. Have faith in God!—faith, not opinions or dead belief, but faith,—faith which learns to see God present in nature, present in providence, present in the soul; which finds him in all changes, him in all joys and sorrows; him in the near duty of the hour; him in the large vision of the ages. Have hope, active hope, which shall enable you to work in the cause of justice and humanity,—work, though in a minority; to work, though no success or reputation seems to come to you. Work, not merely conscientiously, but hopefully; and you will work successfully. Hope to do some good thing for some one. Hope to make joy and peace where you go and where you stay. Hope to serve God by serving man.

And, most of all, have *love*. If there is any bitterness in your heart toward any

human being, root it out. It is a corroding poison in your soul: get rid of it. Love; that is, go out of yourself; go forth in sympathy with others; go forth to do them good by the power of God in your own soul, by the grace of God in your own heart. By your own hope of a grand future, lift others out of their scepticism, their doubts, their despair. These things shall last, they shall not pass away. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Faith, hope, and love, the heavenly sisters, the three Christian Graces, like, yet unlike,—these three shall cause that you be not barren or unfruitful. Begin life so, and it will pass joyfully to its close.—*James Freeman Clarke, "Messages of Faith, Hope, and Love."*

THE BIBLE CLASS.

THE BOOK OF ACTS, CHAPTER III. HEALING THE LAME MAN.

Verse 1. "Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." "Were going up," is the more correct translation, and is adopted in the Revised Version. Peter and John continued faithful to their Jewish training, and went to the temple at the hours appointed for prayer.

"The ninth hour." At the equinox this was at three in the afternoon. But the days were longer at this time, and it might be about four o'clock. When there were eighteen hours of daylight and six of darkness (as we count hours), the day would be divided into twelve parts, each one an hour and a half long.

"A certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried." Alford says it should be "was being carried."

"Whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful."

If he was laid there daily, Peter and John must have often seen him before. Perhaps they knew him.

The gateways seem to have been within the outer enclosure of the temple. The Cambridge Bible says that they gave admission to the inner court, from the court of the Gentiles and the court of the women. There were three on the north and three on the south; but the Beautiful gate was probably the one on the east, which led from the court of the women. The others were overlaid with gold and silver; but this was "made of Corinthian bronze, and much surpassed in worth those enriched with silver and gold" (Josephus).

3. "Asked an alms." "Alms," an old English word, is in the singular number. It was formerly spelled "almesse," and is derived from the German "Almosen."

4. "And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him," etc.

The Cambridge Bible suggests that Peter perceived that the man had the faith necessary for his cure.

May we not find here an illustration of the principle touched upon in some previous lessons in regard to the miracles of healing worked by Jesus himself as well as by his disciples ?

If, as I believe, the miracles were in accordance with certain laws,—spiritual laws, which are also natural laws,—may not one of these laws be that a spiritual relation between the healer and the healed is a necessary condition ? It does not follow that there must of necessity have been a friendship or close previous acquaintance, but that the two minds shall be in harmony, and the one open to receive the impression from the other. Perhaps Peter *could not* have healed one of the unfriendly members of the Sanhedrim. His own power would not be lessened, but the receptive quality would not be there to accept the benefit. In the present case the mind of the lame man may have been opened and prepared by a previous knowledge of Peter and John. We see that he was a religious man by what followed the cure.

6. "Silver and gold have I none."

Peter had not kept for himself any of the money contributed by the new converts.

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth — walk !" So in the Revised Version. The old version has "*rise up* and walk." But the best manuscripts have only "walk."

"And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength."

Peter's touch seems to have been necessary to the cure. "Feet and ankle bones": these words are of a technical character, and are found nowhere else in the New Testament. This and the other minute details

of the cripple's case suggest that the author is a physician.

8. "And he, leaping up, stood, and walked." The cure was perfect and immediate.

"Entered with them into the temple." What a delight this must have been to him! His going *with them* also suggests a previous acquaintance.

"Walking, and leaping, and praising God." The joy in his newly recovered strength made him unable to leave off exercising his powers.

Peter or John must have told this story to Luke. It is full of graphic touches.

9. "And all the people saw him." There were many witnesses to the cure.

12–26. Peter's discourse follows: —

"As though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"

Holiness is power. But the Revised Version has godliness.

13. "The God of Abraham . . . hath glorified his Son Jesus." The Revised Version has "servant," not "Son." But some students think "his *child* Jesus" the better rendering, and the Revised Version gives it as an alternative.

Peter's speech is full of courage, denouncing the Jews in the strongest terms.

16. "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong."

The use of the word "name" for "power" is a Jewish habit, sometimes even as an absolute equivalent for God. (Cambridge Bible.)

17. "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it." Peter's vehement reproof wounded his hearers; and he evidently relents and softens toward them, and now tries to comfort and encourage them. Sins of ignorance may be forgiven.

18. "The times of the refreshing." The season of peace and rest which the reign of the Messiah should bring.

20. "Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you." A better rendering, "who before was appointed for you."

21. "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things." Observe the change in the Revised Version, "restoration" instead of "restitution."

22. "Moses indeed said, A prophet," etc. See Deut. xviii. 15–18. See also John i. 21.

25. "Ye are the sons of the prophets." These promises and warnings are for you.

"Saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The great glory and blessing of the Jewish race was that they were appointed to be the religious teachers of all the countries of the earth. Jesus saw this clearly, and worked toward this end.

26. "Unto you, first." Peter evidently had a point of great interest to make here. The application of his discourse was coming. Unfortunately, he was interrupted in the midst of his eloquence. L. F. C.

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

[*Send all matter for this department to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, Mass.*]

Will any mother who would like to have "Gentle Measures in Training the Young," by Jacob Abbott, or any one who would like "Black Beauty," address Miss Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass.?

Miss Margaret D. Fette, 11 Walnut Street, Boston, Mass., offers the following books: "A Matter-of-fact Girl," Theodore Gift; "Donna Quixote," Justin McCarthy; "Pomegranate Seed"; "The Kellys and the O'Kellys," Anthony Trollope; "Mary Anerley," Blackmore; "Christian's Mistake," Mulock; "Lady Bell," a story of the last century, Sarah Tytler; "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," Besant; "What she Came through," Tytler; "Next of Kin," "Wanted," Betham-Edwards; "I say No," Wilkie Collins; "One of Three," Jessie Fothergill; "Marrying and Giving in Marriage," Mrs. Molesworth; "Madame's Grand-daughter," Frances Mary Peard; "Crown of Wild Olive," Ruskin; "Micah Clarke," Conan Doyle; "House of the Wolf," Weyman; "Master of Ballantrae," Stevenson; "The Search for Basil Lyndhurst," Rosa N. Carey.

The King's Chapel Branch of the Cheerful Letter Exchange offer the following books. Address Miss Stevenson, 9 Exeter Street, Boston, Mass. "The Story of Elizabeth," Miss Thackeray; "The Ladies' Gallery," Justin McCarthy; "Donald Ross of Heimra," William Black; "The Pathfinder," Cooper; "Cara Roma," Miss Grant;

"Double Cunning," George M. Fenn; "Cast up by the Sea," Sir S. W. Baker; "Christie Johnstone," Charles Reade; "At the Altar," E. Werner; "The Three Miss Kings," Ada Cambridge; "The Wooing o't," Mrs. Alexander; "The Awakening of Mary Fenwick," "The Sun Maid," "The Midnight Sun," "Lucy Crofton," "Initials," "Maid Ellice," "The Essays of Elia," "Sabina Zembra," "The Old Mam'selle's Secret."

Mrs. A. F. Wadsworth, 5 Louisburg Square, Boston, Mass., offers the Boston Saturday evening *Transcript.*

Mrs. Sarah G. Jones, St. Mary's Street, Brookline, Mass., offers the *Forum,* November, 1896, to November, 1897, also the *Literary Digest* for 1896.

Miss K. A. Homans, 164 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., offers a limited number of copies of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Miss Grace J. Dunham, Falmouth, Mass., offers *Atlantic Monthly* from January to September, 1897.

The King's Chapel Branch of the Cheerful Letter Exchange offers fifteen copies of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," which will be sent to any applying to Miss Dorothy Amory, 278 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

REQUESTS.

Libraries.

Standing requests for libraries from: —

Mrs. O. A. Langston, Sidney, Comanche County, Texas;

Mrs. C. S. Stowell, Magnolia, Boulder County, Colorado;

Mr. Davis M'Carn, Anamosa, Iowa;

Mrs. D. Jayne, Jamestown, Chautauqua County, New York;

Mrs. Emma Miner, Lisbon, New Hampshire;

Stephen D. Rhoden, La Pine, Crenshaw County, Alabama;

Mrs. Isadore E. Rice, Oakland, Oregon.

Those who send offers and requests for the Book Club will do us a kindness by noting the following suggestions: 1. Please write very clearly. 2. Do not use a pencil. 3. Do not use contractions, especially names of States (as Cal. and Col. for California, Colorado). 4. Write on one side only of the paper. 5. Do not forget to give your full address. (The State is now and then omitted.) 6. Do not send matter for the Book Club to Miss Clarke, but to Mrs. Nichols, the Book Club secretary.

I am teaching in a backwoods country place, remote from any large town, and no library or reading-room anywhere near this place. I would be glad to have the following-named books sent from the Book Club: "Marcella," Harkness's "Easy Latin Method," "The Five Little Peppers, and How they Grew," "Evangeline," "Faust" (in English), "Tom Brown's School-days," "Ben-Hur," and any other good reading suitable to boys and girls from ten years of age to twenty. This is a farming country, remote from any of the refining influences of civilization. I have a small school here, and am doing all I can to better the morals and manners of the people. So I shall be very glad to have any reading or cards that will help me in interesting the young people. Mary Davis Anderson, Ephesus, North Carolina.

Mrs. E. C. Venter, Brookville, Indiana, writes: "All the people in the neighborhood have come to me for reading. Will some of the *Cheerful Letter* friends send me books and magazines to help pass the long winter evenings?"

Will some one send the "*Woman's Journal,*" each month, after reading, to Mr. A. D. Hale, Haskins, Oregon?

Any papers or books will be very welcome to Mr. J. Edward Curtis, a shut-in slowly wasting with consumption. Anything for him, sent to Mrs. D. E. Osborne, 452 Arlington Street, Greensboro, North Carolina, will be promptly delivered. Mrs. Osborne will be glad to receive for herself *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Sunday Times.*

The following persons would be glad of good reading, but are not able to buy it: Mrs. Emma White, 451 Arlington Street, Greensboro, North Carolina; Mr. J. Edward Curtis, South Elm Street, Greensboro, North Carolina; Mrs. Alexander Pleasants, South Elm Street, Greensboro, North Carolina; Mrs. W. F. McLellan, South Elm Street, Greensboro, North Carolina; Mrs. W. B. Singletary, Tarheel, Bladen County,

North Carolina; Miss Nellie Robeson, Tarheel, Bladen County, North Carolina.

Miss Violet I. Cairns, Browning, Wisconsin, returns thanks for reading received. Will the sender please continue to send *McClure's Magazine* for 1898? She would also like to see some more of the *Household* magazines, and any kitchen magazines, such as the *New England Kitchen Magazine* or *Good Housekeeping*, and Sir Walter Scott's "Black Dwarf," "The Heart of Mid-Lothian." Clippings of poetry and prose would be acceptable.

Mrs. J. H. Baxter, Sherman, Texas, asks for reading for her children, eleven, nine, and six years of age.

The Life of General Grant is particularly desired by George Wolcott, Foster, San Diego County, California.

Mrs. W. C. Murphy, Mountville, Ohio, would be glad to receive *Ladies' Home Journal* or *Youth's Companion* for the coming year.

Mrs. Jane Blackburn, Skilling, Ohio, a widow with three children, nine, seven, and four years respectively, will be thankful for any reading.

Lillie Wilson, Sandy Ridge, North Carolina, is in need of a spelling-book, geography, and dictionary.

Mrs. K. D. Stafford's address is changed from Pine Grove, Texas, to Kemp, Texas.

Mrs. H. C. Kegley has moved to Union City, Tennessee.

Mrs. E. M. Backus has returned from Kershaw, South Carolina, to Grovetown, Columbia County, Georgia.

NATURAL HISTORY.

INEXPENSIVE PETS.

Last winter I heard a lecturer on botany advise his audience to keep earthworms as pets in the house, stating that their habits would be found very interesting to watch, almost as much so as those of canary birds. The worms must be kept in pots or boxes of earth, of sufficient size to make them comfortable and allow them space to perform their nightly gymnastics. For earth worms are nocturnal animals, and during the day they usually lie quietly in their burrows, the mouths of which are plugged up with leaves, or sticks or protected with a little heap of stones.

At night it is interesting to watch them dragging the leaves about, and to notice what kind of leaves they select and which end they take hold of. They are said to drag the leaves into their burrows by their tips, although to us the leaf-stalk might seem to offer a more convenient handle.

Besides serving as food and as a front door, the leaves are also used as wall paper by the worms, which line the upper parts of their burrows with them, probably liking the feeling of the leaves next their skin better than that of the particles of earth.

The earth-worm is by no means a homely animal, for its skin shines with beautiful rainbow hues. The body consists of from one hundred to two hundred segments, each of which is furnished with bristles, which serve as feet, as by their aid the earth-worm can crawl backward as well as forward. This adds to the difficulty of knowing which end is the head, but it will be found that the head end tapers to a blunt point and has the largest rings. The mouth is furnished with a lip capable of seizing hold of objects and carrying them about.

Although earthworms are land animals, they have been known to live many days under water, while they have been killed in a single night by exposure to the dry air of a dwelling-room. Mr. Darwin used to keep their pots covered with panes of glass.

They are quite deaf, and have no eyes, but are rather sensitive to light, provided it fall upon the front end of the body. Mr. Darwin found that if, in the evening, the pots where he kept his worms were illuminated before they had left their burrows, they failed to appear, although, if they were once out, they could usually be watched for some time with a lantern or candle, without seeming to notice it, especially if they were occupied in eating leaves or dragging them to their burrows.

C. H. C.

The bread of life is love: the salt of life is work.— *Mrs. Jameson.*

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

[*Contributions for this department may be sent to Mrs. J. S. Howe, Chestnut Street, Brookline.*]

Your correspondent for November has my hearty sympathy in the value she puts upon obedience in little children, although, when she tells of the child burned in consequence of disobedience, she ought to remember Casabianca, whose strict obedience brought the like result.

But I think the obedience should always be obtained by gentle methods, not by fear of punishment or reproaches. Make your child in love with truth, with kindness, with courage, and obedience by story-telling, by poems, by your own enthusiasm and your own example. Teach boy and girl alike what we call the soldierly virtues of obedience and promptness, so that they will respect such virtues and long to attain them.

Never let the minor graces, such as wiping the feet or closing doors quietly, stand on a level in your praise or blame with honor or kindness, as if all good things were of equal importance. And Florence Hull Winterburn is very wise, to my thinking, when she says, "Issue as few edicts as possible."

Christina Goodwin.

CARELESS CHILDREN.

A sin of omission has weighed on my conscience for some years; and I hope now for an opportunity to repair it, at least in a measure.

Some time ago I read in a little domestic paper a letter from a mother who was tormenting herself because her daughter, a young girl of fourteen, was forgetful and careless. The daughter was gentle, sweet-tempered, and obedient, but habitually forgot everything she was asked to do. The mother seemed to be very unhappy, and to think that she had done everything in her power to cure this fault. Evidently, she thought she had done her part, and that there was some exceptional defect in her daughter. She "had punished her in every way she could think of," and made a merit of this. The result was complete failure. I remember one of the concluding sentences was: "And yet, unless we can cure such faults as these, what useless—nay, *worse* than useless—men and women our children will become!"

There were several errors exposed in the statement of the case. But, being extremely busy, and hoping that others would write sensible answers, the present writer abstained. Letters of advice were printed; but none were very practical, nor did they meet the difficulty.

Assuming that the evil was not an exceptional one, and that the young girl was not an abnormal case, but represented a common type, it seems worth while to touch upon the subject even now.

In the first place, one errror of the mother, a good, conscientious woman, like many others, was in not understanding the nature of children. The mind of the child does not *hold* and carry an idea. The present is all-pervasive, and absorbs all the faculties. You might as well expect the child to hold something as large as it can grasp in its hand without dropping what was held before as to carry in its mind *two* ideas, the one which occupies it for the time and a previous one.

Secondly, it is extremely discouraging to a good and gentle child (and exasperating to an irritable one) to have an involuntary failure treated as a conscious fault. Repeated unjust punishment hardens some natures and renders others hopeless.

A third error is the overstatement of the case. No doubt there is serious inconvenience in careless and forgetful habits. But we all know men and women of mature age, who have never been cured of this defect, and who are not "worse than useless," nor even "useless." Such instances will occur to all of us. And, while a little gentle and kindly fun is made of the lapses of memory and absent-minded performances, the most helplessly unpractical and careless people are often much loved and honored for their moral qualities, and even for great usefulness in certain lines. To every man his own gifts. But to require a girl of fourteen *not to have any faults* is to require not only that she shall be a full-grown woman, but a full-grown woman of a *perfect* character. How many such women do we know?

No doubt, the better a mother can succeed in training her children, and eliminating the natural faulty tendencies inherited

by all, the better are these prepared for the battle of life, and the better their chance to become useful and happy. But who shall teach the teachers? The passage in Hamlet seems suggestive here:—

Hamlet. Will you play upon this pipe?
Guil. My lord, I cannot.
Hamlet. I pray you.
Guil. Believe me, I cannot.
Hamlet. I do beseech you.

. . . . . .

Guil. . . . I have not the skill.
Hamlet. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me. You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice in this little organ: yet you cannot make it speak. Do you think *I* am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will; though you fret me, you cannot play upon me.

And here is a piece of wisdom from Jacob Abbott: "With a distinct recognition of the fact that whatever is bad in the *native tendencies* of your children's minds is probably inherited from their parents, and, perhaps, especially from yourself, and that whatever is wrong in their *habits of action* is certainly the result of bad training, proceed cautiously and gently, but perseveringly and firmly, in bringing the bent stem gradually up to the right position."

"Instead of being angry with them or fretting and complaining about the trouble they give her, she should leave them, as it were, out of the case, and turn her thoughts to herself, and to her own management, with a view to the discovery and the correcting of her own derelictions and errors."

Is it not probable that, when a system fails entirely, even with a gentle and sweet-tempered child, there is something wrong in the method? Yet this mother seemed to think that all the trouble was caused by something wrong in her daughter instead of by her own blunders. Better cease altogether her efforts at correction, since, if her own incapacity as a trainer could not be removed, she might at least retain her child's affection and confidence, and preserve a pleasant, harmonious relation, while the awkward and tactless hammering upon the tender stem does not accomplish the result aimed at, and might in the end injure the young girl's character or temper irretrievably.

After saying so much as this about the wrong method, it may be worth while to suggest a better. Unless others will kindly give the benefit of their views, this may be done in the next number.

Constance Freeman.

AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

[*Please send all matter for this department to Miss E. D. Chapman, 34 Buckingham Street, Cambridge, Mass.*]

A DESCRIPTION OF ANN.

Each word begins with her name. Example: Ann is lively. Answer: Antic.

1. Ann is vivacious.
2. She speaks aloud.
3. She likes to proclaim her views.
4. She does not like people or things.
5. She has many progenitors.
6. She is fond of the past.
7. She sings a hymn.
8. She takes a narcotic.
9. She belongs to a dangerous party.
10. She is fond of a certain kind of puzzle which often appears in *The Cheerful Letter.*
11. She was poisoned, and took a remedy.

CHARADES.

1.

My first is a kind of butter.
My second is a kind of liquor.
My whole is a kind of charger.

2.

Through my *first* forever flow
Mingled sounds of joy and woe.
In my *second* newly made,
Thousand every day are laid.
In my *whole* I never jest,
Prayers are made and sins confessed.

3.

Taken from an old magazine.

The Coroner's Inquest.

"Ho for my *first*," my *second* said,
"All strangers as we are!
The wind, so long right dead ahead,
Now freshly blows, and fair."

And though 'twas growing dark and late,
Without a sign or word,
Through lane and road and turnpike gate,
They sped to gain my *third!*

It was the dewy morning hour:
The birds began to sing;
The sun which lighted up their bower
Lit up my *third's* pale wing.
It saw my *first* in wild affright
Dash over plain and cliff;
And, ah! it saw a sadder sight,—
My *second* stark and stiff!

They caught my *first*, but not my *third:*
It was too far away;
And all, with hearts by sorrow stirred,
Hied where my *second* lay.
And, then a jury came, and said
(While priests prayed for the soul),
Their verdict was, to wit, "Found dead,
Because he lacked my *whole*."

A. R.

Answers to puzzles in December number:—

ENIGMA.

At Christmas play, and make good cheer;
For Christmas comes but once a year.

CONUNDRUMS.

1. When the surf rises above the pier.
2. He mourns for a second.
3. Because he puts down three, and carries one.
4. Eight cats.

CHARADES.

1. Reformatory—and Reform a tory.
2. Mushroom.

CORRECTION.

There was an error in the enigma printed in the December number. After the words "*and in comes*," the figures should be: 43, 16, 53, 8, 1, 3, 13, 56, 50, 43.

The address of Miss Cora H. Clarke is changed from Jamaica Plain, Mass., to 91 Mt. Vermon Street, Boston, Mass.

Creation is ever doing God's will. Only the human soul can *choose* to do it, because only the human soul can leave it undone.

H. W. F.

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON STATE.

NATURAL HISTORY ANECDOTE.

Much has been written of the power of serpents to "charm" or fascinate other animals, and the subject has always a weird interest. I once witnessed a very strange scene which I believe to be a genuine instance of "charming," though differing from any descriptions I have ever seen.

We were living on an Iowa prairie. My little daughter stood at the door some time talking about "the little ground squirrel"; and at last, thinking it strange that one of the shy little creatures should remain so long near the house, I, too, looked out, and at once saw that the little animal was behaving in a very singular manner. It ran forward a few feet in a straight line, then "backed" nearly the same distance, then forward again, constantly repeating these movements, but each time advancing a little farther.

As I went out to investigate, I passed close to the squirrel without attracting its attention in the least degree or interrupting its curious motions; and I now noticed that it was uttering a peculiar little cry, as if in distress. I now saw beyond it a large snake of the kind called locally a "blow-snake," from a peculiar sound emitted from the mouth. It was coiled against a log, not motionless, but moving its coils in continual slow undulations; and they shone in the sun with most beautiful and varying prismatic colors, the head being motionless, and I saw nothing peculiar in its appearance. I watched the strange scene some minutes, the little squirrel ever coming nearer its foe with each advance, uttering its little cry as if conscious of danger, yet powerless to escape.

At last I seized a stick and advanced nearer, and attracted the attention of the snake, which at once began to emit the sound from which it takes its name. Its coils dropped and assumed their usual dull coloring, and the squirrel quickly ran away.

F. E. B.

It would be interesting to receive anecdotes of animals from other readers, drawn, like this, from personal observation.

The editor hopes that other members of

the Cheerful Letter Exchange will be willing to write letters for the Mothers' Council. There is an opening here for an exchange of ideas which will be a mutual advantage.

MAXIMUS.

I hold him great who, for love's sake,
Can give with generous, earnest will;
Yet he who takes, for love's sweet sake,
I think I hold more generous still.

I bow before the noble mind
That freely some great wrong forgives;
Yet nobler is the one forgiven,
Who bears the burden well, and lives.

It may be hard to gain, and still
To keep a lowly, steadfast heart;
Yet he who loses has to fill
A harder and a truer part.

Glorious it is to wear the crown
Of a deserved and pure success.
He who knows how to fail has won
A crown whose lustre is not less.

Great may he be who can command
And rule with just and tender sway;
Yet is diviner wisdom taught
Better by him who can obey.

Blessed are these who die for God,
And earn the martyr's crown of light;
Yet he who lives for God may be
A greater conqueror in his sight.

—*Adelaide A. Procter.*

TRUE UNION.

We would be one in hatred of all wrong,
One in the love of all things sweet and fair,
One with the joy that breaketh into song,
One with the grief that trembles into prayer;
One in the power that makes thy children free
To follow truth, and so be one with thee.

—*Samuel Longfellow.*

Nothing fails in this world, not even the feeblest finger-stir of endeavor. P. C. M.

Let us not lose, forget, slight, the teachings of Gethsemane, the place of quiet, the place of struggle, the place of victory. Let its history awaken not merely sentiment or gratitude, but desire to possess the like spirit; and, when our days of trial darken about us, may we have so trained our souls in quiet that our struggles shall have the great and perfect triumph. J. F. W. W.

Contemplate pain as a warning, and much of its problem will be solved. Pain warns against sin, disease, danger, death.

P. C. M.

If thou wouldst be happy and easy in thy family, above all things observe discipline. Every one in it should know their duty, and there should be a time and a place for everything. And, whatever else is done or omitted, be sure to begin and end with God,—*Penn.*

We cannot live on bread alone: we need every word of God. We cannot live on air alone: we need an atmosphere of living souls. We must be constantly giving ourselves away: we must dwell in houses of infinite dependence or sit alone in the waste of a godless universe.—*George MacDonald.*

We need to grow into a diviner thing than the time shows, than the time aspires to, than the time believes in. We need to take the Christ from where he has been laid, and allow him to walk abroad in the atmosphere of daily life, once more appealing pungently and convincingly, and building himself into the soul, its life. We do not need to keep Easter as a memorial; but we do need that living Easter power which shall raise us above our very infirmity and make us quick with the elements of the holy life.—*J. F. W. Ware.*

The days that have gone down forever in the west are so related to the days that are now in the meridian that it is with a sweet sadness we think of much which once met the eye and occupied the mind,—church, school-room, homestead, and other things now passed by, being in gear with the rolling wheels of time. It is with a sweet sadness we remember friends with whom we walked and communed, now caught up to the better land. A sweet gladness is now in many a pleasant experience,—a sweet fondness for the exercise of hope, that "springs eternal in the human breast." So, under a good Providence, there is sweetness all along, relating to what has gone by, what is going by, and to days which are yet to shine.—*William M. Bicknell.*

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

The address of the Editor after December 1 will be Miss L. Freeman Clarke, 91 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass.

There will be a meeting of the Cheerful Letter Exchange on the first Friday in February at 10.30 A.M. at 25 Beacon Street, Boston. All interested in this work are cordially invited to be present.

Our Book Club department has grown so large that we shall ask of all who in the future write to us for books to send the name of some minister as a reference,—when possible, the minister of the church to which they belong.

We fear that some of our subscribers have the impression that by subscribing for *The Cheerful Letter* they will be sure to receive books. The Book Club has proved an attractive department of our paper; and many of our subscribers are interested in sending books to those who are unable otherwise to obtain them. But we engage only to keep the Book Club open for offers and requests, and that under certain conditions.

We remind all who send parcels or boxes with books, papers, etc., to correspondents or to libraries, that it is absolutely necessary to write at the same time to the receiver, enclosing the receipt which shows that the express or freight charges on the package have been paid. For want of this precaution, valuable packages have never been received. It is not probable that any of our *Cheerful Letter* friends send packages without prepaying them, but it is a common mistake of the express agents to charge the receiver for a prepaid package.

N.B.—PLEASE READ DIRECTIONS AT BEGINNING OF BOOK CLUB BEFORE WRITING FOR BOOKS.

Subscribers to *The Cheerful Letter* are kindly requested to send subscriptions to the *Treasurer*, not to the Editor.

In sending requests or offers of books, it is essential to address these communications to the *Book Club* (Secretary Mrs. W. B. Nichols). If addressed to the Editor these letters are in some cases postponed; in others altogether omitted. See directions in every number of *The Cheerful Letter*.

THE ATTENTION OF ALL READERS OF "THE CHEERFUL LETTER" IS CALLED TO THE FOLLOWING NOTICE:—

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of our paper by addressing letters, asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who infringes this rule will be dropped from our list; and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by our Executive Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to our secretary, Miss Langmaid.

DIRECTIONS.

EDITOR OF "CHEERFUL LETTER,"—Miss L. Freeman Clarke, 91 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass.

SECRETARY OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Miss Bertha Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass.

SECRETARY OF BOOK CLUB OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, Mass.

TREASURER OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass., or 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

Subscriptions and renewals should be sent to the treasurer, also all changes of address and requests for discontinuance. The subscription is fifty cents a year. If subscribers do not receive the paper regularly, they are requested to notify Miss Howe at once.

Those not able to subscribe for the paper, but desiring to receive it, may do so by writing to Miss Louise Howe, as above. Please give full name and address. Many of our members take the paper in order to send it to those who are not able to subscribe for it.

Notice that requests for membership and for correspondents go to Miss Langmaid, our secretary; requests for books and offers of books, to Mrs. Nichols; and to Miss Clarke only articles for insertion in the paper (not Book Club matter). All such material should be written on *one side only* of the paper, and sent by the first of the month *before* that in which it is printed.